

IF. Academic & Clinical Relationships

A - Search for

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Article by Clara Griffin, mg # '21

NURSING AS A PROFESSION FOR COLLEGE WOMEN

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We are all prone to offer advice to the young graduate hesitating on what we like to call the threshold of life. We say that we want to help her choose wisely, but what we really mean is that we want to tell her about our own job in the hope that she will elect to throw in her lot with us. For we all want to enlist new blood for the old causes and take new inspiration from youthful zeal and enthusiasm.

Nor will any of the modern industrial armies welcome new recruits more warmly than will the nursing forces. For we nurses have a tremendous piece of work cut out for us, more than any set of human beings have ever been asked to do before, nothing less than the reconstruction of the world on a health basis. The scope of the task which Florence Nightingale outlined so sagaciously one hundred years ago is just beginning to be apprehended today. We have failed to grasp hitherto that her conception of public health nursing and her scheme of sanitation are as essential as any of the other parts of her teaching to the well rounded whole. We have been groping slowly toward the completeness of her clear vision, which placed these as the foundation stones on which the state must build.

It has taken a World War to show us here in America the end results of our tardy comprehension. We didn't like to hear that 70 per cent of our young men failed to pass physical examinations for the navy and marine corps in 1916. We didn't like to hear that of twenty million school children examined in a recent federal survey 75 per cent needed attention for the correction of physical defects. We are reluctant to draw conclusions as we have been slow to accept the responsibilities of our position as a world power, but now we begin to see that to realize the great future which is before this country we need a nation of vigorous, clear headed citizens 100 per cent efficient.

But that kind of citizens is not picked on bushes, nor acquired by letting things run along, taking the course of least resistance. To prepare for our station in the first rank of nations in the world that is to be we have got to start in with the prospective citizens now in their cradles. We can't afford to let a lot of our future citizens develop tubercular hips and spines or twist their bones with rickets because their mothers don't know how to feed them. We don't want to reap a harvest of organic hearts and

stiff joints, defective ears, and weak stomachs from minor defects of teeth and tonsils that call for correction among our school children. We don't want them to grow up without a chance to learn the simple habits that mean health, from ignorance of which thousands of people fill our hospitals today.

To climb out of the ruts of neglect and indifference means the biggest kind of a campaign of preventive measures and education. Uncle Sam's plans call for fifty thousand public health nurses, which would seem a modest estimate. For all over the country there will have to be more baby clinics, more classes and clubs for mothers and children, more visiting nurses, more school nurses, and bigger out-patient departments and dispensaries in all the hospitals.

There will be work for everybody. We need, first and foremost, the girl with executive ability, for she is the one that sets all the wheels in motion. She is the one that runs the clinics, who organizes and directs the public health nurses of a whole city, who acts as superintendent or supervisor of a hospital or training school. She is the one who looks forward, who makes plans and sees visions, but at the same time is alive to the needs of the day at hand, in touch with everything that goes on in her department, ready to take advantage of the propitious moment or invent a new method. She is also a student of human nature, with a gift for seeing the good points and special capacities of her workers, and a knack for placing each where she can do her best.

The girl who can teach will find a most varied field for her talents. She is needed in the clinics to give classes for mothers and children, to give courses to school children, and to their teachers, especially those in the rural districts. Her place is of great importance in the training school where she has charge of the instruction of the nurses themselves. An allied activity is that which calls for writing ability, the preparation of material for lectures and courses, for articles and advertising campaigns.

There is a demand, well nigh insatiable, for the girl who can handle people, who "has a way with her." It is she who goes into the homes as district visitor or public health nurse and makes converts at first hand. It is she who wins the shrieking Lizzie or Jimmie to the clinic and explains to the voluble mother the import of the doctor's orders, or persuades her to follow them. She gains the confidence of the patients who need the help of the Social Service Department, and continues her oversight of them in their homes as convalescents, where her tact adjusts home conditions to their needs, and spreads the gospel of soap and sunlight among the family at large.

One of the more recent developments of public health work, that of industrial nursing, presents an appealing type of problem

to the girl with a gift for human sympathy. She supervises health work among the employees of large factories or machine shops, combining with this in some cases visiting in the homes. Her opportunities for preventive work and educative propaganda are unlimited, but her interests lie nearest to that great army of adolescent toilers as gay and heedless as they are ignorant and wilful, the boys and girls of the shops and mills whose lives she tries to brighten a little as well as to trim somewhat closer to the line of safety and common sense.

We are asking much of the college graduate when we invite her to spend two and three years of further preparation in our training schools. But we also offer much. In any case the first years out of college are apt to be laboratory years in which a knowledge of people and the working conditions of the world at large are somewhat painfully acquired, and theories put to the acid test of actual practice. The "raw hand," the untried worker, is likely to serve an apprenticeship in which she performs more or less humble services while she watches those ahead of her and studies their performance and methods. In the hospital this apprenticeship is open instead of being tact, and the nurse resigns herself during this period of her development to coining only the gold of experience. But a most wonderful opportunity for doing this unfolds itself before her. Certainly as a preparation for the art of living the hospital training stands unrivalled. The book of human nature lies open in all its richness and variety. The young nurse finds that she is expected to be superhuman, a being of infinite understanding and sympathy, perfect in self-control and self-mastery. To measure one's self constantly by the standard of ever increasing and diversified demand is a stimulating business, and means growth in undreamed of ways of strength and resourcefulness.

To fit young and untried girls for responsibilities that mean life or death is the task of the training school, and to that end its scheme of moulding human character has been developed. There is undoubtedly something terrible in a system which accepts nothing less than one's best, and which reacts upon the most powerful principles of human conduct, among them loyalty, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice, as well as the lesser motives of pride and self-interest. But it is the tension of this striving after an always unrealized perfection which fuses the inexperience of youth into the finished product, a nurse clear headed and steadfast in the face of any demand, who can carry a message to Garcia promptly and as specified.

Student government has had its part in shaping the morale of the modern training school. Its very existence there marks the changes which have modified a system almost military in its

exactions. For an active student government association embodies as nothing else can the principle that it is not the factors impressed from without but those which find expression from within which fashion character. The work of the world today calls for self-reliance and the spirit of intelligent co-operation, and it is the women trained to self-government who join most readily in that "active, willing participation in the responsibilities of the group which is the deepest demand of our democracy."

With the honored names of such women the annals of nursing are richly filled. Lillian D. Wald is chief, perhaps, among those in whose hands the lamp of Miss Nightingale is brightly burning. She has been first to organize district work and school nursing in this country, and has related the history of her experiences and achievements in a book, "The House on Henry Street." Another book which records the development of a new departure in nursing is "Social Work in Hospitals," by Ida M. Cannon, who is head of the first social service department founded in an American hospital, the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Another originator and leader is M. Adelaide Nutting, director of the Department of Nursing and Health, Teachers College, Columbia University, who has been instrumental in forwarding the teaching activities of nursing in raising its educational status, and in establishing the department she now heads. Annie M. Goodrich, her assistant professor, who has charge of the administration course, and is also director of nurses at the Henry Street settlement, was the prime mover in establishing the army school of nursing, and was its first dean. Julia Stimson, the present dean, and Clara D. Noyes, director of the department of Nursing of the American Red Cross, are two more leaders whose services have been signal in the executive field. The most prominent editor among nurses, the late Sophia F. Palmer, was until this year editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of Nursing*.

To mention these names only out of so many that demand equal prominence emphasizes the fact that in the profession of nursing it is the reward of the many, not of the few, to feel the joy of successful accomplishment, of making a real contribution to mankind. The Superintendent of a training school, the public health nurse, or the social service worker are following lines of work essentially divergent, but alike in their power over the lives of others. The woman who chooses this calling may hold fast to the things that make life pleasant in other professions, congenial associations, close friendship, financial independence, the realization of ambitions, but she may add to these things the deeper satisfaction that comes from constructive achievement in the world work of bettering human lives.

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MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL
SCHOOL OF NURSING

Relative to our science requirement for admission

For a long time it has been two years of science and whenever possible including chemistry. However, we have admitted a student without chemistry. Beginning July, 1942, schools registered in New York require a year of biology and a year of chemistry. I suppose they may postpone that requirement. *is the same*

You refer to the graduates of the Boston Latin School. That school places its emphasis on liberal arts colleges. I am of the opinion that some of their graduates might not be prepared to enter some of the colleges emphasizing technical preparation, for example - Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I remember talking with Mr. Hapgood, Principal of the Girls' Latin School about two years ago relative to a young woman who did not have three sciences. There was a time when New York required general science and two other sciences. That requirement did make considerable difficulty. Many times applicants come in to see us before they plan their senior year and therefore are able to include the other science. It is almost unknown for us to lose a good student because of a lack of a science. She is either too young and can take this additional course in summer school or an evening course, or, she is going on to college for a year. In fact, I cannot recall an instance where we could not make some plan for a young woman to meet this requirement without making too hard a demand on her. A requirement of two years of science is very helpful when we get a very undesirable applicant. Many times it is that kind of an applicant who has the limited high school course.

The reasons for our desiring biology before they enter is obvious. The reasons for chemistry must often be explained. Our students need a foundation of chemistry in order to understand the blood chemistry tests such as kidney function. They also need to understand gastric analysis, urinalysis, non-protein nitrogen, blood sugar of diabetes, electrical shock which may come from touching electrical equipment with wet hands, reasons for applying salt solution pads in electro cardiogram, why Fowlers solution is so poisonous, the ways in which foods contribute to growth and building up of body, basal metabolism, oxygen therapy, solutions, fire extinguishers, etc. The students need to get a scientific point of view. *Student who is not with the school & why not must be removed.*

We wish to have a foundation in biology and chemistry in order that we may more rapidly teach their application.

Every year we must add to the content of our nursing course as every year brings more and more to medical practice to which the nurse must assist. Here the nurse must be able to care for patients in all the specialties: psychiatry, neurology, neuro-surgery, orthopedics, Ward 4 research ward and infections. There are also constant developments in general medicine. The pure nursing content is so inclusive that the student must have as much foundation as possible before coming in.

Note: New York will make exceptions to some of their requirements if the candidate has made a C or 75 average in a full year in a registered college. ~~I also think there is some exception if an applicant has passed college boards.~~

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